



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Designation #9905500

Early Coordination Packet

INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



PARSONS TRANSPORTATION GROUP
Engineers and Planners • Carmel

December 2000

I. Project Description

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) are preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the U.S. 31 Improvement Project between I-465 and State Route 38 in Hamilton County, a distance of approximately 12.5 miles (See Figure 1). The existing U.S. 31 facility is a four-lane (six lanes between I-465 and 106th Street), divided roadway with limited access right-of-way and various at-grade intersections. It is classified as an Urban Principal Arterial

Travel lanes are 3.6 m (12 ft) in width and bordered by a 3.3 m (11 ft) paved outside shoulder and a 1.2 m (4 ft) paved inside shoulder. Three northbound and southbound through traffic lanes exist from I-465 north to 106th Street. North of 106th Street, however, the outside through lanes are eliminated. The through travel lanes are separated by a grass median 15.2 m (50 ft) to 18.3 m (60 ft) in width. Right turn and left turn auxiliary lanes exist along U.S. 31 at all major intersections. The typical right-of-way width is 44.2 m (145 ft) each side of the centerline south of 146th Street and 26.5 m (87 ft) each side of the centerline north of 146th Street.

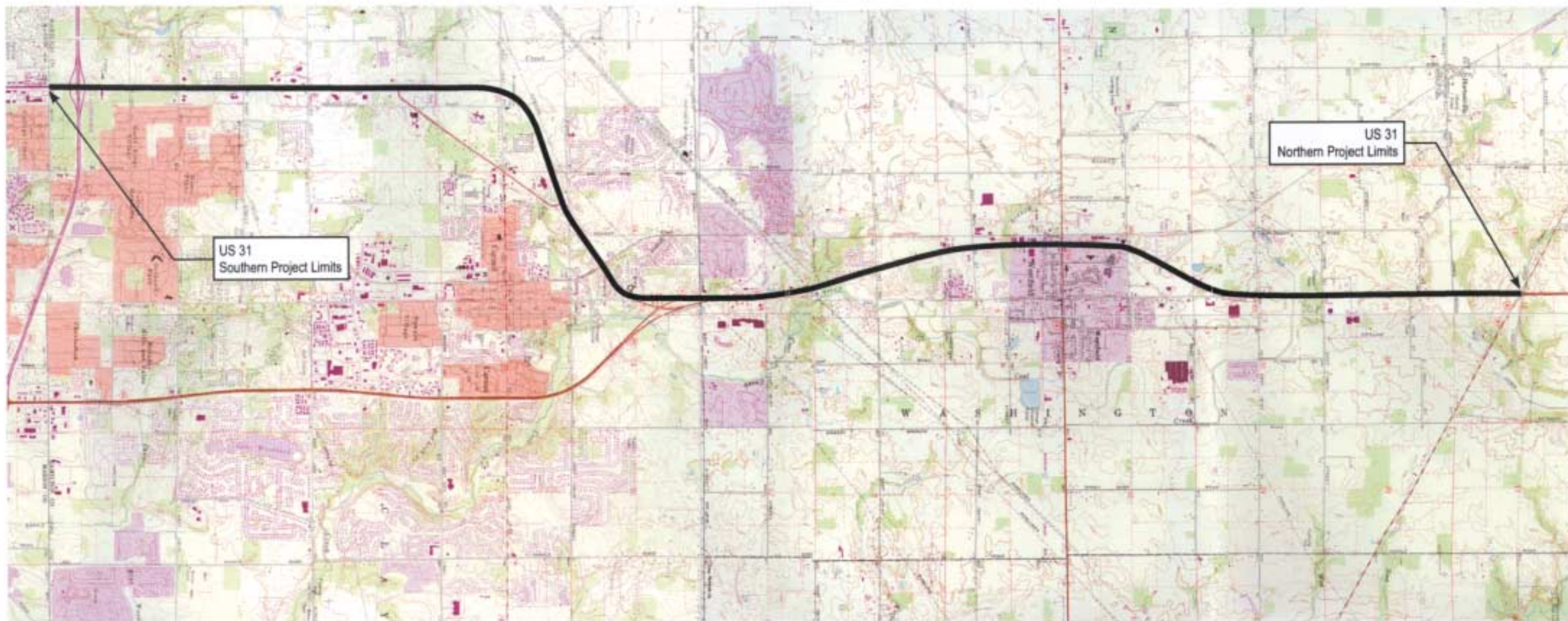
The U.S. 31 Improvement Project is included in the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Long Range Transportation Plan. A Notice of Intent for the project was published in the Federal Register: Vol. 65, No. 120, Page 38624 – June 21, 2000.

II. Previous Studies

In 1997, INDOT completed a Major Investment Study (MIS) on this segment of the U.S. 31 corridor. The MIS evaluated various alternatives including upgrading the existing facility to urban freeway standards, new alignments, combinations of upgrading and new alignments, Transportation System Management (TSM), Travel Demand Management (TDM), High-Occupancy Vehicle (HVO) lanes, and public transit. The MIS recommended alternative was to upgrade the existing U.S. 31 facility to urban freeway standards and add travel lanes.

III. Purpose and Need

Hamilton County is one of the fastest growing counties in the United States. It has experienced a 58% increase in population between 1990 (108,936) and 1999 (172,094 - estimated). Prior to this, Hamilton County experienced a 33% increase in population between 1980 and 1990. Much of this growth has occurred along the U.S. 31 corridor resulting in increased traffic congestion. Segments of the facility are currently functioning beyond their capacity. In addition, traffic along most of the corridor is projected to increase 20-35% by the year 2025 even if no improvements are made. The increase in traffic and congestion over the years has also led to an increase in accidents. As a result, the purpose of this project is to reduce congestion/travel time (i.e., improve Levels-of-Service) and improve traffic safety along the U.S. 31 corridor.



Source: U.S. Geological Survey, Fishers, Westfield, Carmel, Noblesville Quadrants



FIGURE 1
PROJECT LOCATION
U.S. 31 Early Coordination



IV. Alternatives

The U.S. 31 EIS will evaluate both positive and negative impacts associated with the following alternatives:

“No-action” – For this alternative, the existing U.S. 31 corridor would remain unchanged in its present condition (i.e., no upgrades/improvements).

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) – The TDM alternative will include such options as telecommuting, carpooling, and spreading out peak period demand by staggering working hours (i.e., “flex time”).

Transportation System Management (TSM) – The TSM alternative will include signal additions/removals, signal coordination and timing, and/or intersection reconfigurations (e.g., adding/extending turning lanes).

Public Transit – These alternatives will include the use of light rail, commuter rail, and/or buses.

Build Alternatives – These alternatives will include 1) various options for adding through lanes to the existing facility and replacing the at-grade signalized intersections with non-signalized interchanges (i.e., upgrading the existing facility to urban freeway standards) and 2) new alignments.

V. Environmental Issues

Aerial photography of the U.S. 31 corridor in Appendix A illustrates existing land uses, National Wetland Inventory (NWI) wetlands, hydric soils, surface water resources, and prime farmland soils.

Land Use – As indicated in the aerial photography in Appendix A, the southern portion of the corridor is dominated by office/business development while the northern portion is dominated by agricultural land. The agricultural land also occurs throughout the entire corridor with most of these areas being designated as prime farmland. Commercial and residential developments along with naturally vegetated areas are also widely scattered throughout the corridor. The naturally vegetated areas are comprised mainly of relatively small and fragmented parcels of deciduous forests. Other land uses along the U.S. 31 corridor include three churches, two cemeteries, Cool Creek Park (Hamilton County), three public schools (Washington Elementary School, Westfield Middle School, and Westfield High School), and the St. Vincent Carmel Hospital.

Water Quality/Resources – The entire project area falls within the West Fork of the White River watershed. The existing U.S. 31 facility crosses the following eight creeks:

- Little Cool Creek
- Hiway Run
- Grassy Branch
- Cool Creek
- Jones Ditch
- Lindley Ditch
- Two unnamed tributaries to Cool Creek.

These creeks and any other watercourses within the project area will be surveyed to determine if they are jurisdictional “water of the United States” and, if so, evaluated for potential impacts to their flow, channel, and water quality in accordance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

The study will also identify and evaluate potential impacts to any water supply reservoirs, ground water aquifers, and designated wellhead protection areas (WHPA) in accordance with the Safe Drinking Water Act. Currently, the St. Joseph Aquifer is the only designated “sole source aquifer” in Indiana. This aquifer does not fall within the U.S. 31 project limits.

Wetlands – Based on the National Wetland Inventory (NWI) mapping, there are a number of potential wetlands located along the U.S. 31 corridor. The majority of these wetlands are associated with the creeks within the project area and are classified as Palustrine Forested (PFO). In addition, based on the Soil Surveys for Hamilton County, much of the project area supports hydric soils, which represent potential wetland areas. These areas will be surveyed and wetlands delineated in accordance with the Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual (1987). All practical avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures will be evaluated in accordance with Executive Order 11990 – Protection of Wetlands, Section 404(b)(1) guidelines of the Clean Water Act, and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between INDOT, IDNR, IDEM, and USFWS.

Threatened & Endangered Species – The project’s potential involvement with federal and state threatened and endangered species is currently unknown. In determining the presence and potential impacts to federally listed species, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be consulted in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. As for state listed species, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources will be consulted.

Historical & Archaeological Resources – The project’s potential involvement with historical and archaeological resources is currently undetermined. In order to identify the presence and potential impacts to these resources, a literature review, field surveys, and coordination with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology will be conducted in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act.

Public Parks and Recreational Areas – Cool Creek Park, owned and operated by Hamilton County, and the athletic fields associated with Washington Elementary School, Westfield Middle School, and Westfield High School are currently the only known public parks and recreational areas along the U.S. 31 corridor that would fall under the jurisdiction of Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act. As such, any potential encroachment upon these resources would require a stringent evaluation of avoidance, minimization, and mitigation alternatives. In addition to these properties, the project area will be surveyed for any other potential Section 4(f) land.

Farmland – As illustrated on the aerial photographs in Appendix A, prime farmland is common throughout the project area. As a result, potential impacts to these resources will be identified and evaluated in accordance with the Farmland Protection Policy Act. This will include the preparation of Form AD 1006 and coordination with the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Floodplains – The existing U.S. 31 facility crosses seven FEMA designated 100-year floodplains (Little Cool Creek, two unnamed tributaries to Cool Creek, Grassy Branch, Cool Creek, Jones Ditch, and Lindley Ditch). Three of these 100-year floodplains have designated floodways (Little Cool Creek, Grassy Branch, and Cool Creek). Any potential impacts to floodplains/floodways will be determined and avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures identified in accordance with Executive Order 11988 – Floodplain Management.

Noise – Because of the numerous sensitive receptors located along the U.S. 31 corridor (e.g., residences, churches, etc.), a noise study will be conducted in accordance with INDOT's "Highway Traffic Noise Policy", October 15, 1997. Existing and future noise levels will be determined using STAMINA 2.0. If necessary, noise abatement measures will be evaluated using OPTIMA.

Hazardous Waste – A file search will be conducted to identify the presence of any CERCLA, RCRA, LUST, and UST sites within the project area. In addition, a Phase I Initial Site Assessment (ISA) will be conducted to determine the potential for occurrence of hazardous materials within properties that would be impacted by proposed alternatives.

Air Quality – No portion of this project is within a designated non-attainment area for any air pollutants for which US EPA has established standards. As a result, a conformity determination in accordance with 40 CFR Part 93 will not be required. However, a microscale carbon monoxide analysis will be conducted to determine if this project will result in violations of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for this pollutant. This analysis will be conducted using MOBILE5a and CAL3QHC, Version 2.0.

Residential/Business Displacements – Based on the scope of the project and the abundance of development along the U.S. 31 corridor, it is likely that the project could result in residential and business displacements. As such, potential displacements associated with the project will be identified and evaluated in accordance with the

Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act and Executive Order 12898 – Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations.

Visual Impacts – The potential visual impacts for each proposed alternative will be identified and evaluated. The evaluation will include "views of the road" and "views from the road". Where necessary, consideration will be given to design quality, art, and architecture.

VI. Process and Schedule

The U.S. 31 EIS will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), FHWA Technical Advisory T6640.8A, "Guidance for Preparing and Processing Environmental and Section 4(f) Documents", and INDOT's Procedural Manual for Preparing Environmental Studies (1996). The project will follow the NEPA/404 Process which requires agency coordination at three specific phases of the project: 1) Purpose and Need; 2) Alternatives to be carried forward into the DEIS; and 3) Selected Alternative. The current estimated schedule for the project is as follows:

Purpose and Need Statement	Spring 2001
Preliminary Alternatives Development & Analysis	Fall 2001
(Identify alternatives to be carried forward.)	
Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)/ Public Hearing	Summer 2002
(Selected Alternative)	
Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)/ Record of Decision	Early 2003

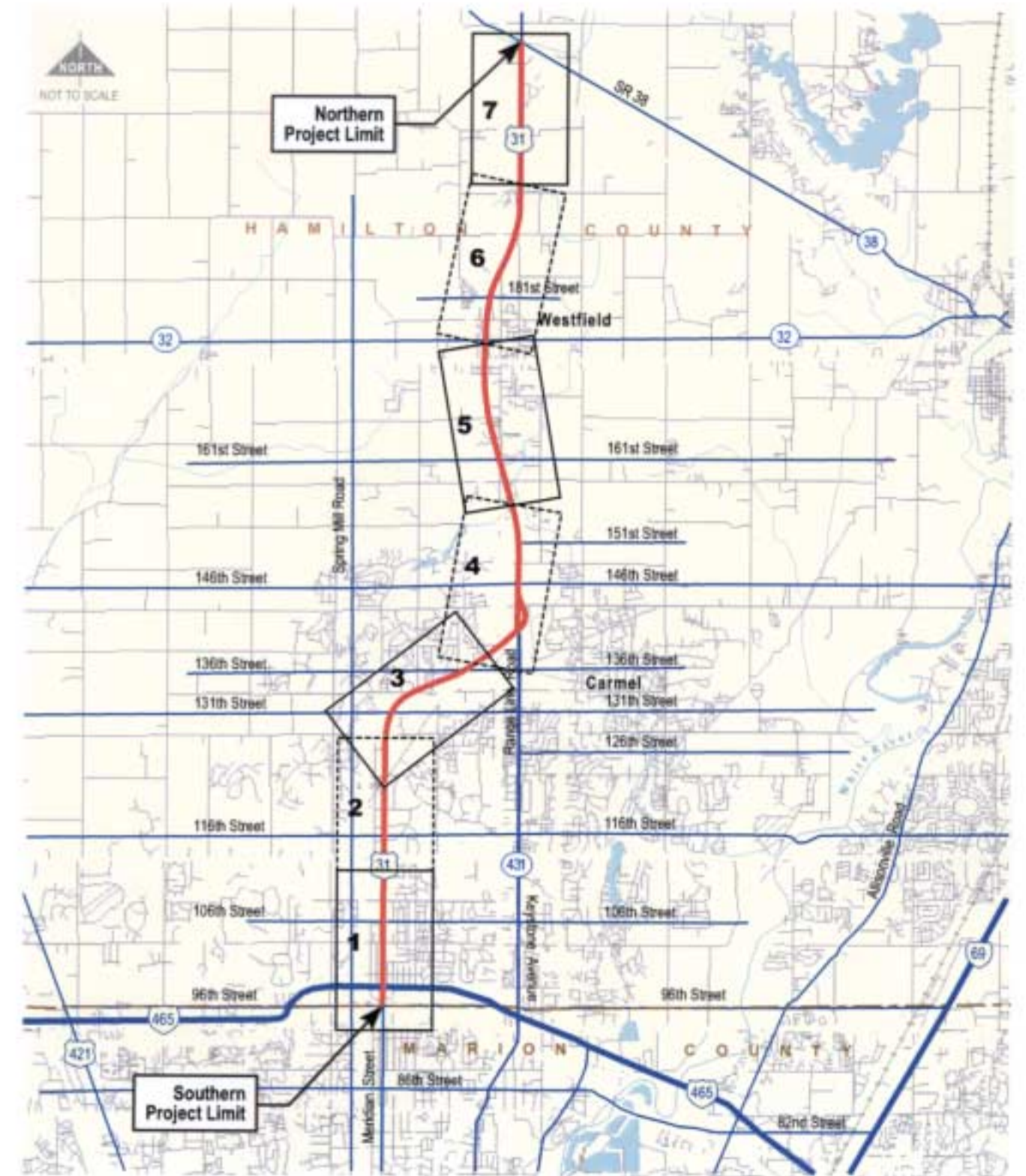
The public involvement process for this project will include public meetings, newsletters, a project video, a project web site, and a public hearing.

VII. Distribution

This Early Coordination Packet was distributed to the agencies listed in Appendix B.

APPENDIX A

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS




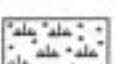






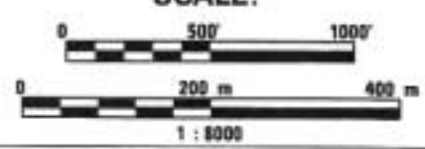
SOUTHERN PROJECT LIMIT



LEGEND

-  HYDRIC SOILS/INCLUSIONS
-  PRIME FARMLAND
-  HYDRIC SOILS & PRIME FARMLAND
-  WETLANDS (NATIONAL WETLAND INVENTORY MAPS)
-  STREAM
-  U.S. 31 RIGHT - OF - WAY

SCALE:






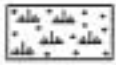


INDIANA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

US 31 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
EARLY COORDINATION

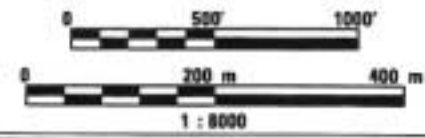
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LEGEND

-  HYDRIC SOILS INCLUSIONS
-  PRIME FARMLAND
-  HYDRIC SOILS & PRIME FARMLAND
-  WETLANDS (NATIONAL WETLAND INVENTORY MAPS)
-  STREAM
-  U.S. 31 RIGHT - OF - WAY

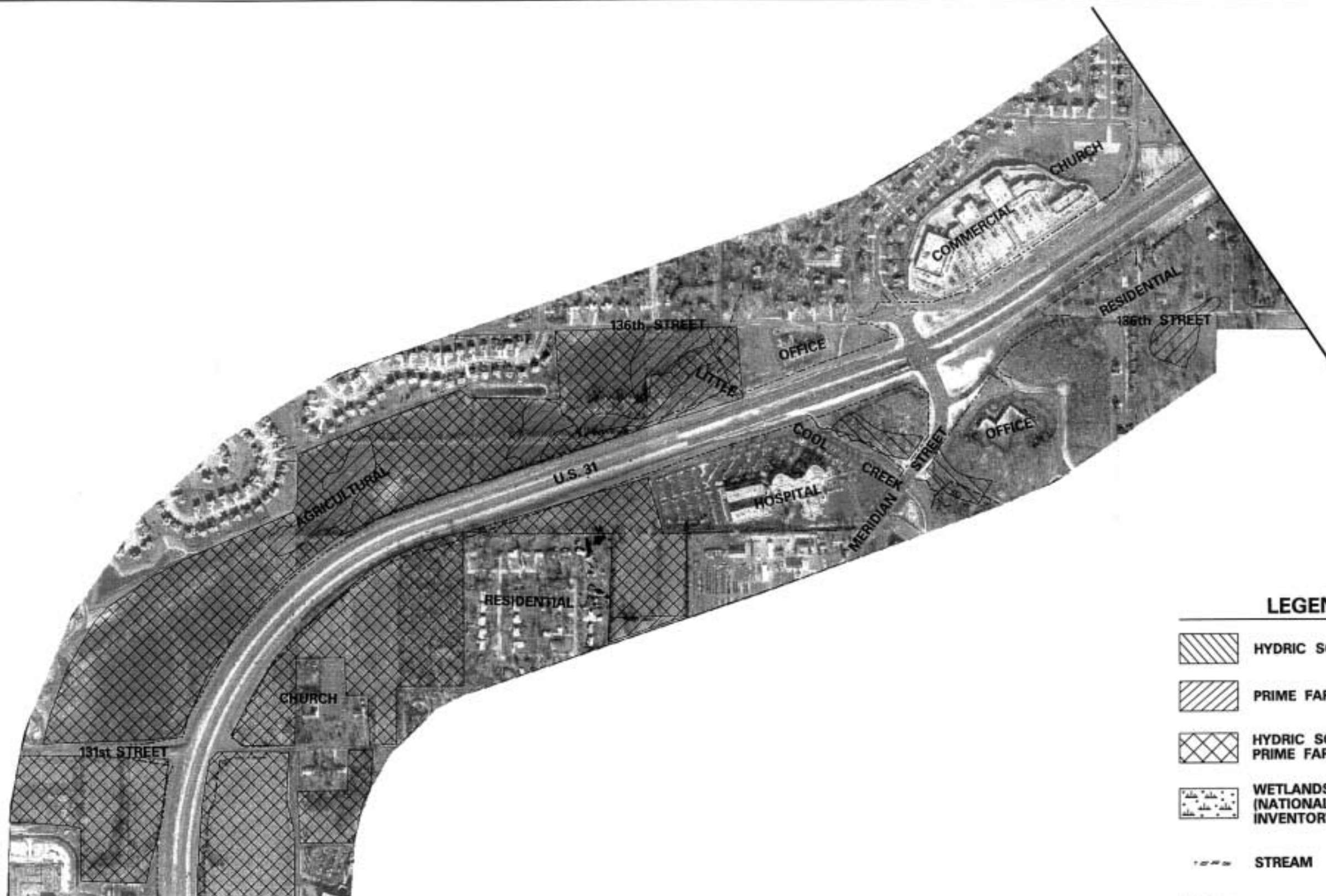
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INDIANA
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US 31 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
EARLY COORDINATION

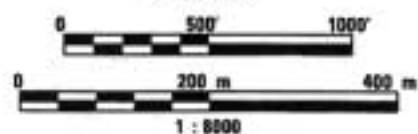
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-  HYDRIC SOILS/INCLUSIONS
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-  WETLANDS (NATIONAL WETLAND INVENTORY MAPS)
-  STREAM
-  U.S.31 RIGHT - OF - WAY

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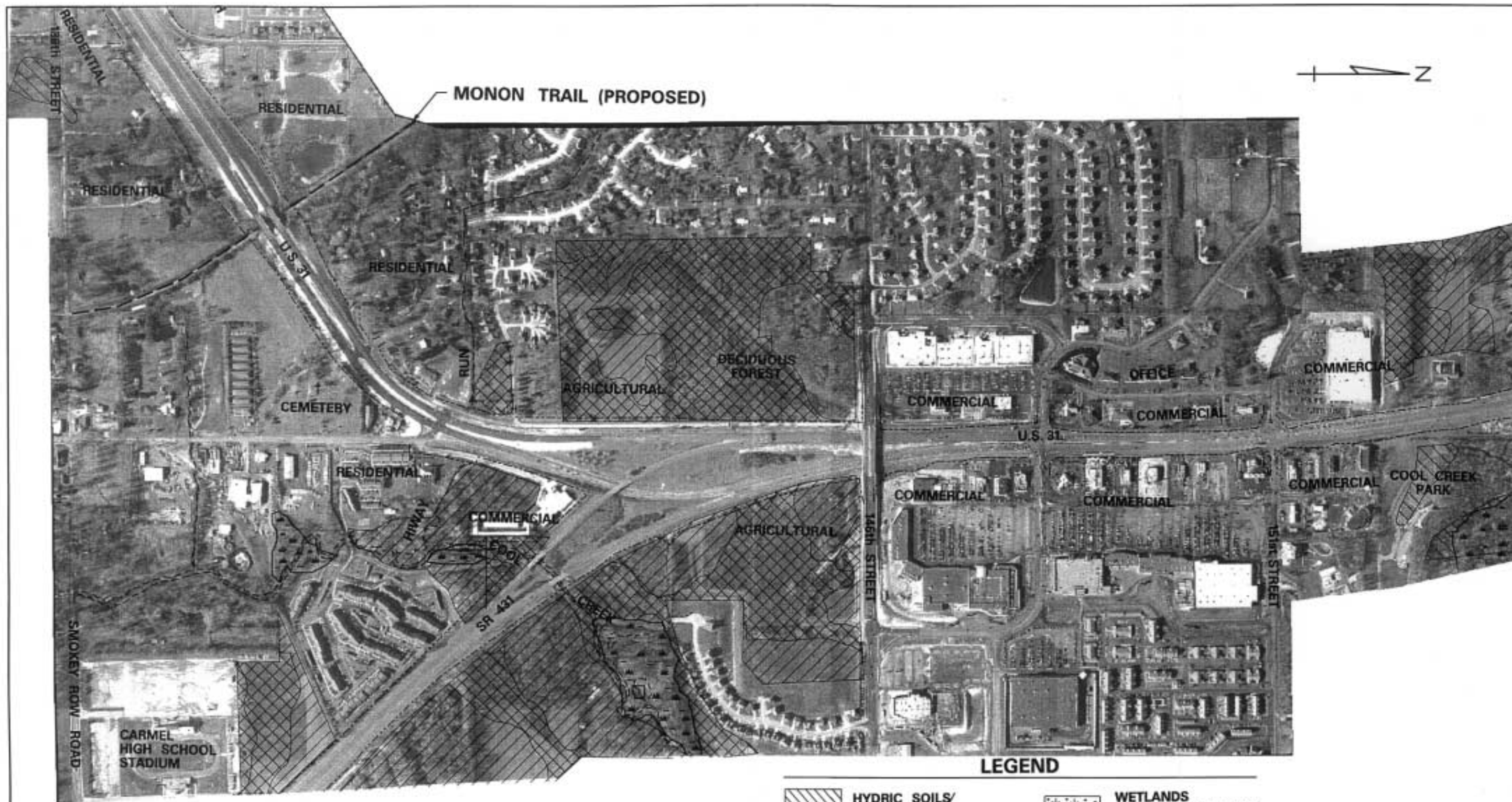
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3 OF 7



LEGEND



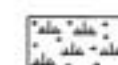
HYDRIC SOILS/
INCLUSIONS



PRIME FARMLAND



HYDRIC SOILS &
PRIME FARMLAND



WETLANDS
(NATIONAL WETLAND
INVENTORY MAPS)

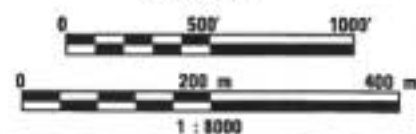


STREAM



U.S. 31 RIGHT - OF - WAY

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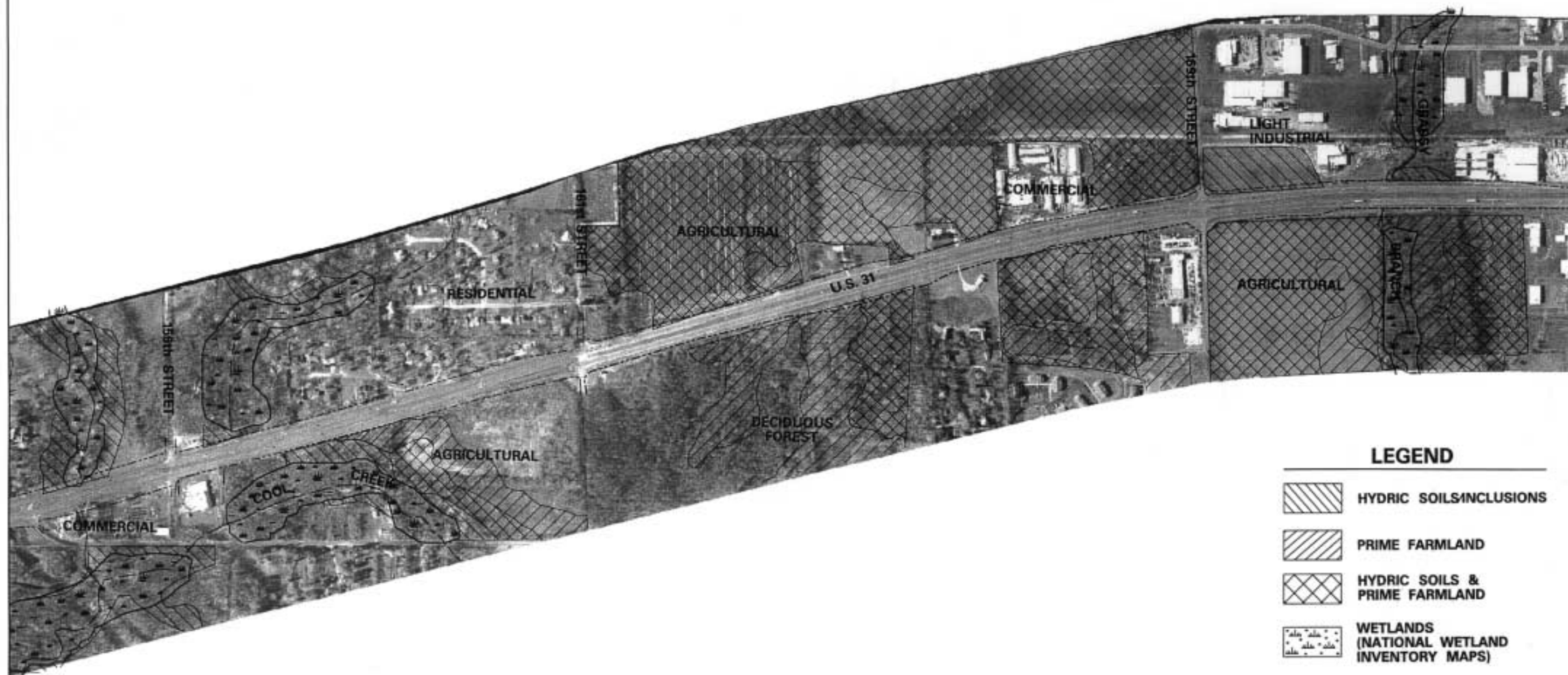


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US 31 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
EARLY COORDINATION

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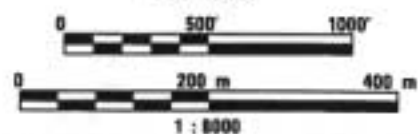
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LEGEND

-  HYDRIC SOILS/INCLUSIONS
-  PRIME FARMLAND
-  HYDRIC SOILS & PRIME FARMLAND
-  WETLANDS
(NATIONAL WETLAND
INVENTORY MAPS)
-  STREAM
-  U.S. 31 RIGHT - OF - WAY

SCALE:



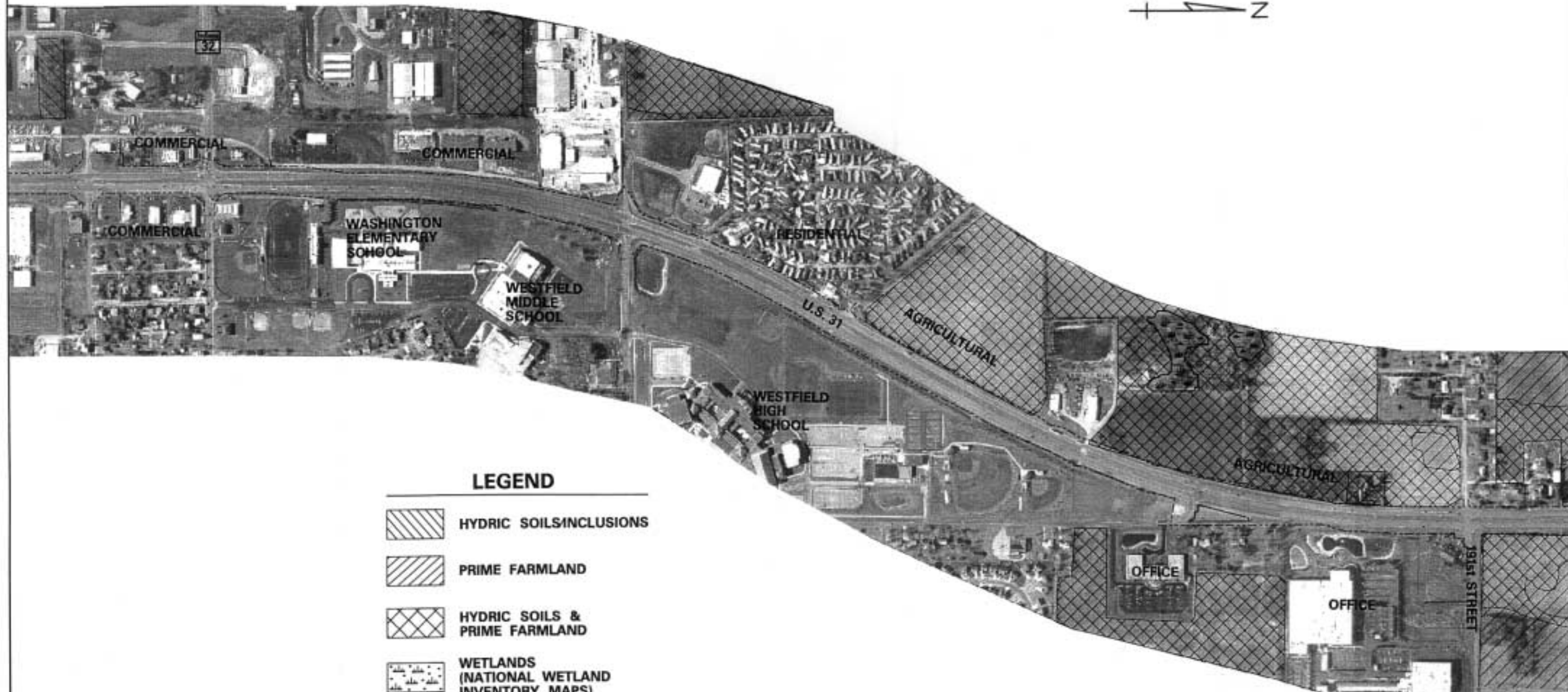
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US 31 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
EARLY COORDINATION

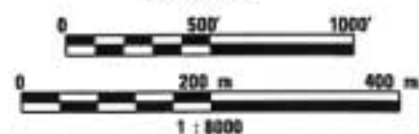
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LEGEND

-  HYDRIC SOILS/INCLUSIONS
-  PRIME FARMLAND
-  HYDRIC SOILS & PRIME FARMLAND
-  WETLANDS (NATIONAL WETLAND INVENTORY MAPS)
-  STREAM
-  U.S. 31 RIGHT - OF - WAY

SCALE:



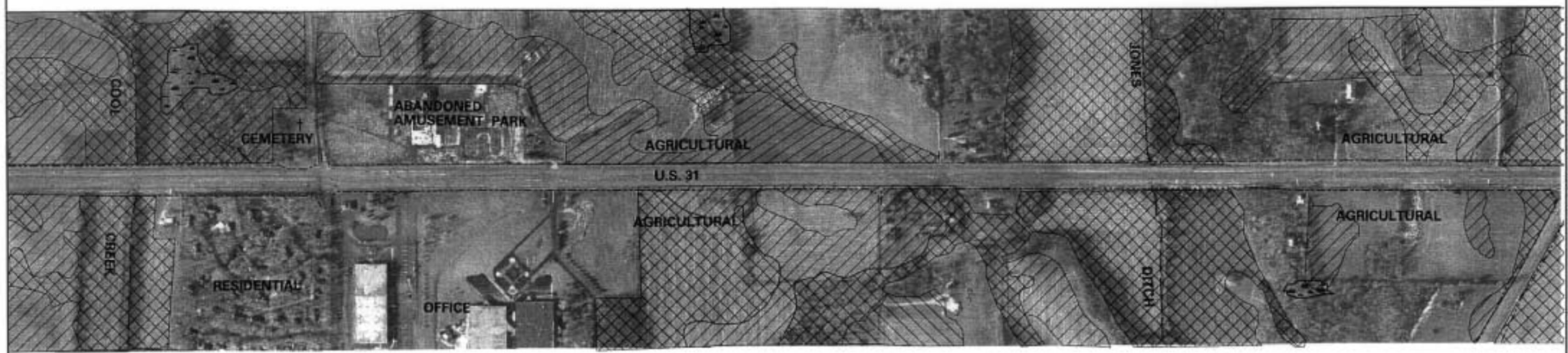
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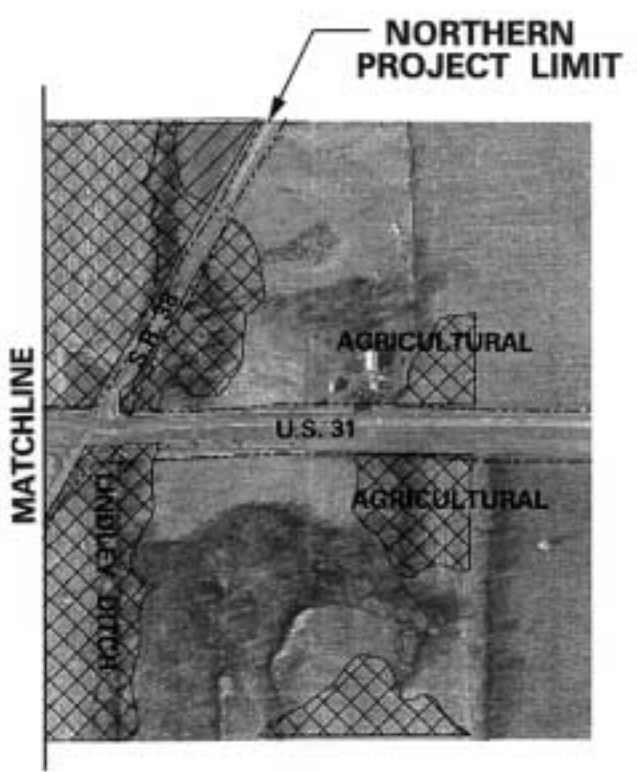
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US 31 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
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6 OF 7



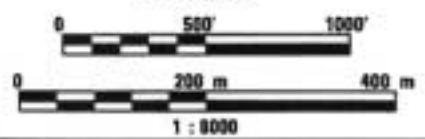
MATCHLINE



LEGEND

-  HYDRIC SOILS INCLUSIONS
-  PRIME FARMLAND
-  HYDRIC SOILS & PRIME FARMLAND
-  WETLANDS (NATIONAL WETLAND INVENTORY MAPS)
-  STREAM
-  U.S. 31 RIGHT - OF - WAY

SCALE:



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SHEET NO.
7 OF 7

APPENDIX B

DISTRIBUTION LIST

APPENDIX B US 31 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT EARLY COORDINATION PACKET DISTRIBUTION LIST

Federal Agencies

Federal Highway Administration
Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Department of Army, Corps of Engineers, Louisville District
U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region V
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

State Agencies

Indiana Department of Environmental Management
Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish & Wildlife
Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation & Archaeology
Indiana Department of Transportation, Intermodal Transportation Division
Indiana Department of Transportation, Greenfield District
Indiana Geological Survey, Environmental Geology Section

Local Agencies

City of Indianapolis, Metropolitan Planning Organization
Hamilton County Planning Commission
Hamilton County Health Department
City of Carmel
Carmel Fire Department
Town of Westfield
Westfield Fire Department
Clay Township
Washington Township

Section 106 Consulting Parties

Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana
Hamilton County Historical Society
Hamilton County Historian
Westfield/Washington Historical Society
Carmel Clay Historical Society
Monon Railroad Historical & Technical Society
Delaware Tribe of Western Oklahoma
Miami Tribe of Oklahoma